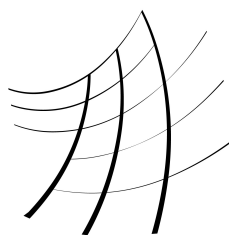# BRIDGING THE AGE GAP
Working together to develop rural communities

Report of the study session held by
Rural Youth Europe
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
April 15th – 22nd 2012

Youth – Jeunesse

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

Intergenerational Solidarity is an important topic for Rural Areas as many contemporary challanges (esp. demographic developments, aging and migrating) affect rural areas more severe than others. Therefore Rural Youth Europe decided to have a study session on it. To make Intergenerational Soldiarity not only an object of the session – something to talk about – but to take an experience based approach, participants from all age were invited for the session (and came). Already this was a new and very rewarding experience for Rural Youth Europe as a youth organisation.

Involving different generations was of special importance because, as it was found out during the session, age is a topic loaded with a lot of stereotypes. Therefore it is of utmost importance to communicate with other generations rather than to presume their intrests in order to achieve Intergenerational Solidarity.

For the session itself as well as for any cross-generational activity communication was identified as a key success factor: It beginns even with clarifying the use of words like "age", "experience" or "solidarity" as they can have different meanings to different people. Taking a step back, analysing the communicative situation one is in and looking for alternatives with the help of others turned out to be a promising strategy.

Cross-generational projects can be an important step on the way to Intergenerational Solidarity. During the session it showed that an emotional approach to motivate people for such projects can be more successfull than a purely rational.

When choosing methodology – either for a cross-generational project or for educational activities in the field like the here described session – the intergenerational aspect should be taken into consideration for even the smallest step: As a result of the session, open methodology which provides participants with the opportunity to make and exchange (intergenerational) experiences should be given special attention. But even in the choice of games or simple tools the question if the needs of all participating generations are met has to be asked and answered.

Intergenerational Solidarity can give a great added value to local communities. From the "Know your Neigbour" campaign of the Irish rural youth organisation to a project on training general practitioners in geriatrics in Albania the participants saw good examples for communities that live up to Intergenerational Solidarity. It also showed that already existing ideas

can be improved when different generations can contribute their thoughts and views.

2   Introduction

Rural populations in Europe are ageing rapidly as young people move to urban areas for study and work reasons. Increasing depopulation of rural areas is contributing to the social exclusion of any young people who remain in rural areas as public services such as health, education and transport are reduced or cut. Rural youth organisations are starting to work together with local communities to breathe new life into rural communities, particularly by working together across generations and by co-operating with a wide range of community stakeholders. Improving skills in managing cross-generational projects has been identified by rural youth organisations as highly need as well as more visibility for their community work, particularly in getting much-needed support from local business and government.

The aim of the study session is promote the importance of intergenerational solidarity amongst rural young people. By working together across generations we can more effectively support sustainable rural communities and create a better future for rural young people. "Bridging the age gap" aims to promote the social inclusion of young people, specifically by promoting intergenerational dialogue and solidarity in youth work and youth policy amongst rural youth organisations.

2.1   Aims and objectives

The aims of the study session were:

- To promote intergenerational solidarity in rural youth work
- To promote the social inclusion of young people through cross-generational projects

Objectives:

- To learn about European policies and developments in the promotion of intergenerational solidarity
- To exchange good practices on cross-generational project management

- To provide practical skills in developing and managing cross-generational projects

- To support participants in building confidence as youth actors and assisting self-development of personal competencies

- To develop new cross-generational projects on the local, national, regional and European level

- To develop a series of e-tools which can be used by participants and other young people in their home organisations

The aims and objectives of the study session lead the team of facilitators to formulate the following key questions:

- How can rural youth work benefit different age groups in society including children, teenagers, adults and senior citizens?

- How can rural youth organisations co-operate with people from different age groups to organise and facilitate their activities

- How can dialogue between younger and older generations be improved in rural areas?

- How can younger and older generations work together to build more sustainable rural communities?

- What factors do we need to be aware of in organising cross-generational projects?

2.2   Participant profile

In the call for participants the following conditions for participants were listed:

- Actively involved in their sending organisation as a volunteer or staff member

- Interested in developing intergenerational projects in their local community

- Motivated to develop knowledge and skills and to share experiences with other participants.

- Any age – as the topic focuses on cross-generational projects, we would like to encourage participants in their 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and beyond to apply.

- Able to communicate in English

- Able to attend for the full duration of the course

Compared to other activities of Rural Youth Europe – and to many activities of the European Youth Centre Budapest (EYCB) – the open age range is standing out. The supervising Educational Advisor suggested to reflect the special topic of the study session already in the profile of the participants. For Rural Youth Europe it was a challenge to find participants beyond its usual age range for activities (18-30). To find older participants the call for applications was distrubuted through different networks which whom Rural Youth Europe cooperated in the past –like the European Rural Alliance ERA or the Farmers and Rural Women organisations. In many countries these organisations are closely related to Rural Youth Europe´s member organisations. We received nearly 90 applications, including 18 from people over 30 years of age. Some more expressions of interest were received by older people but language barriers were often mentioned as a reason not to apply in the end.

We turned out to have 37 participants at the study session, including six preparation team members. The participants, from 20 different countries, were from all parts of Europe –from Ireland to Russia and from Greece to Norway. 2/3 of them came from Rural Youth Europe Member organisations. As the topic was rather new for the organisation we relied on having participants from outside the Rural Youth Europe network with expertise in the field.

As age was an important factor of the session, the description of the age range of the participants will be a bit more detailed. The youngest participant was 18 years old, the oldest turned 67 during the seminar. 11 participants were over 30, ranging from 32 to 67, bringing the average age of the whole group to 29. Most of the participants which were beyond 30 years of age came from partner organisations or institutions we got to know while preparing the study session. The preparation team realised they might face additional challenges in ensuring that the team members, allthough some were considerably younger than many of the participants, would be accepted by everyone as leaders, trainers or facilitators. To be able to respond to this possible challenge and reflect the participants´ age range already in the preparation of the study session, a prep team mem-

ber was chosen who was well beyond the age of 30. Our youngest team member was 19 and the oldest 41.

There were 15 male and 22 female participants at the study session which is not too unusual for Rural Youth Europe activities. It reflects the membership structure of Rural Youth Europe in which most organisations have a balanced gender ratio in their membership and some have more female than male members. The 21 participants (not including prep team) coming from rural youth movements were active on different levels (local to national) in their organisation and also covered different fields of activities (such as agriculture, training, youth camps, rural advocacy). There were participants involved with farming but the majority volunteered for youth projects, as group leader or board member of their organisation. Of the 11 participants not coming from rural youth movements most were related through profession or volunteering to the topic of intergenerational solidarity. We had several project managers for cross-generational projects in enterprises or local communities. Besides the people involved with youth only a few participants were mainly working with organisations dealing with older people's interest.

2.3 Programme outline

The programme aimed at getting to know each other and becoming acquainted with the topic of intergenerational solidarity on the first day. It was also important to create a common vocabulary for the participants coming from different backgrounds according to age, nationality, sending organisation, education and so on. One special aspect, the use of the words OLD and AGE is described in the box as an example.

> The useage of some important words was intensively discusses during the study session. Apparently translating from your mother tongue or your cultural background into "European English" and back can lead to difficulties. The word old: As a matter of politeness it was proposed (by a younger prep team member) not to call the participants in their sixties old (which might sound rude to some ears) but "more experienced" instead. After a short discussion the idea was rejected because it was stereotyping. Indeed, during the seminar it showed that many younger participants were more experienced in some fields than the "more experienced". The word age: "Manifesto for an age friendly Europe" was the

title of one document worked on during the week. To many ears this sounds like a claim for supporting senior citizens. But something different was meant: Mainstreaming the different perspectives age groups can have on problems and solutions.

The second day of the programme started by presenting best practice in cross-generational projects. These were later on used to identify success factors of intergenerational solidarity. With the method of dilemma theatre the participants had the chance to work on intergenerational situations they had experienced themselves and to try to find alternative ways of acting in them. The topic of conflicts between generations was also taken up by the movie "happy feet" which was watched later that night.

Communication was seen as a main success factor already by the prep team. In the morning of the second day participants had identified it as very important as well. Therefore Wednesday morning, day three, dealt with instruments to analyse communication in depth. The second half of the day started with some practical advise in project planning and how to stress and strengthen the intergenerational aspect in them. These sessions formed a transition phase from theory to practice. It became clear to participants that the nicest planned cross generational project is worthless if it does not meet the needs of its target groups.

Thursday started with some practical advise in project planning and how to stress and strengthen the intergenerational aspect. There was a free afternoon which also gave time to reflect on the things learned so far.

On Friday the project work was finalised. The participants with the different project idea's clustered themselves in thematic groups and tried to identify the emotional core of their topics. This was used to produce empathetic motivation presentations. The second half of the day was facilitated by an external trainer from AGE-platform Europe. The participants talked about policy measures which could support intergenerational solidarity.

The last day of the seminar, Saturday, turned back to the individual level and participants could set aims for themselves after the seminar. They also got the time to reflect on what was learned and to plan with whom of the participants they wanted to stay in touch when the seminar was over to share ideas and to cooperate. Throughout the whole week participants filled in their learning diaries which served as their personal reflection instruments as well as a resource for further development. Friday afternoon

participants were given the time to finalize their learning diaries.

3   Programme, Input and discussions

Daily Recurring Programme Elements

To structure the programme and to maximize the learning outcome for the participants there were three recurring programme elements every day.

Rise and shine: The day started with a group game, the introduction of the programme for the day and the topics to be worked on.

Reflection groups: At the end of the day the participants got together in reflection groups consisting of one prep team member and an (as far as possible) age and gender balanced group of four to six participants. In the reflection groups not only the methodology was reflected on and feedback on the programme was gathered but also learning outcomes of the participants were shared in the groups. In addition to the outcomes of the sessions, the statements regarding the programme and their learning outcomes made by the participants in the refelction groups form an important part of this report (if below a quotation is given without further reference it was said by a participant in the refelction group).

Learning Diary: In the beginning of the seminar every participant received a learning diary with the daily programme and a few questions for the day. As this tool was quite unique for Rural Youth Europe's activities and contributed a lot to the success of the study session it will be described in a bit more detail. Each day participants filled in a page of the diary that included a few guiding questions. Examples of the types of questions raised are: Emotion of the day; Name three things that you have learned today; Thing/activity in which I found out the most; Skills I improved today; my definition of intergenerational solidarity etc.

The purpose of these questions was to give everyone the chance to reflect on the day in a structured but yet individual way. Later on participants pointed out that this method was a great chance to think of the day from different sides: emotional and educational, "to realize what I have really learnt that day and what was the best part of it, what I want to keep for future". The emotional part at some point was more important for trainers: to realize the mood of the group and in case of need to change the track.

Participants were encouraged – but not obliged – to read out some of their notes during the reflection groups. A selection of the answers given by participants has been included further on in the report.

One of the most interesting discussions in the reflection groups during the week was when participants had to choose a picture that would define how they felt. One of the groups received a sales brochure. Their reasons they gave when choosing their pictures were they felt: modem, a vacuum cleaner because of getting so much inspiration and good ideas, like a flash-light (at the end of the tunnel) because participant had finally found an idea for the title of their project – which they felt would make it easier for them to activate people to join because the new title transferred not only the project idea but also an emotion to possible volunteers.

An equally important part was "My SMART aim for a year" or what I am going to do when I go back home and there were several answers:

- Increase a number of 4H (Youth Club) members in the organisation

- Promote 4H Club business idea further

- Organize oneself and clean up the mind to consider what want to do further.

3.1 Getting to know each other and the topic of the study session

As said before, an important aim of the first day – besides getting to know the other participants, prep team members, hosting institutions, etc. – was to create a common understanding of Intergenerational Solidarity and the related vocabulary which we needed for the whole week. As study-sessions built very much upon the existing knowledge of the participants present it was also important to create an atmosphere, in which knowledge can be shared and the already existing experiences within the group can become visible. Therfore we employed mainly open methodology in the first day so that participants would spend most of their time in small and changing groups.

The experience of the organisers is that people hold stereotypes about age groups. So a part of the programme dealt with existing stereotypes in the participants' countries. To visualize them pictures of old and young people were drawn (see 1 on p. 10). Participants later stated that they were "fas-

cinated that the stereotypes are the same all over Europe". This indicates that age-related stereotypes have a strong manifestation on our culture and therefore must be taken into account when working cross-generational.
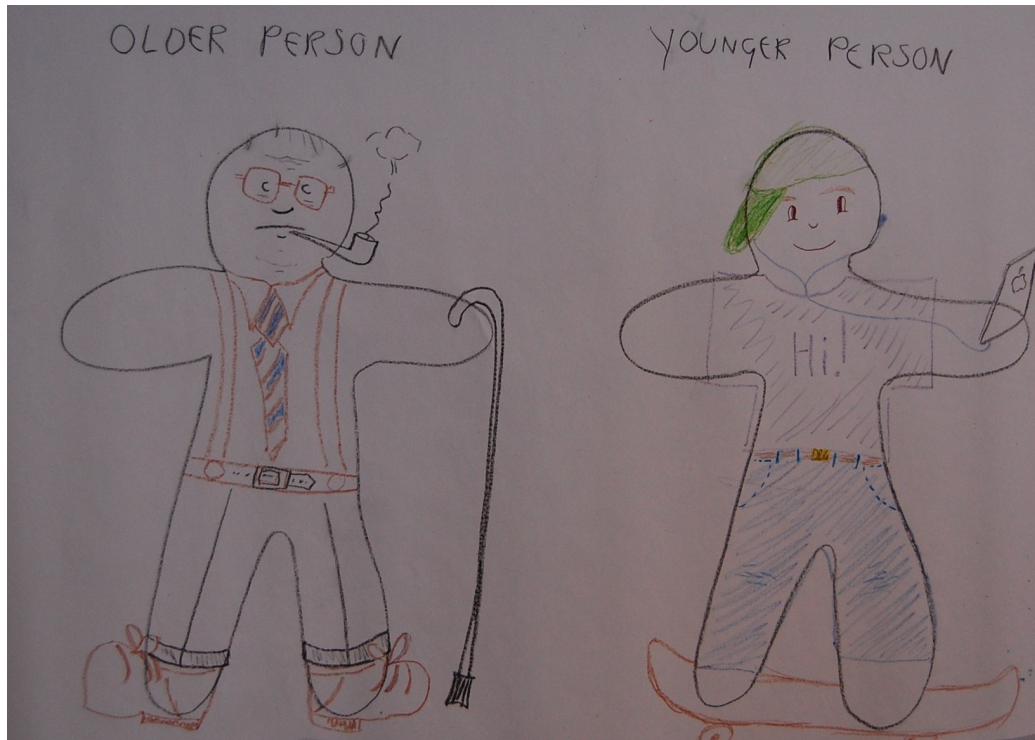
Figure 1: Picture of sterotyped young and old persons

To get a common understanding of the vocabulary we needed to discuss Intergenerational Solidarity we had to work on different words in the field. It showed that such a session was deeply needed because not even for English native speakers the meanings – or intentions – of the words were completely unambiguous. The word "solidarity" e.g. had a very political connotation (esp. for some older participants). It was agreed to regard them for the duration of the seminar as "European English" and not to stress the personal associations within them too much. Also the difference of solidarity as a concept and solidarity as "a physical thing" – showing solidarity – was brought up in the discussions.

As part of this workshop some of the institutions working in the field were introduced. In particular, several definitions given by them were read and worked on by the participants. These definitions were: Intergenerational Practice (Beth Johnson Foundation), Intergenerational Learning and Inter-

generational Practice (European map of Intergenerational Learning), Inter-generational Co-operation, (Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe)[1] . Key words like positive resources, lifelong learning, respect, knowledge and collaboration were derived from these texts.

One aim of the day was to produce several definitions for intergenerational solidarity of which two are quoted (in the original phrasing by the participants) below:

- "Intergenerational Solidarity is an inclusive and mutual beneficial practice of neighbourhoods, communities and societies, in which values, skills and knowledge are shared between generations to achieve greater understanding and increase social capital."

- "Intergenerational Solidarity: when generations respect, share and link skills, values and knowledge through lifelong learning, resulting in communities who co-operate, understand and coexist."

- "Intergenerational Solidarity - an ability to make people together in aims of better understanding and co-operation between generations. To do this we have to be positive, show respect for each other and make peace and justice. We have to share our knowledge so that we can co-exist and achieve Intergeneration Solidarity."

The definition listed last was the one that gained the biggest acceptance within the group. The idea of declaring it as a course definition was, nevertheless, omitted, as much further debate would have been necessary for that – without bringing too much added value to the group.

3.2 Best practice and success factors within cross-generational projects

For studying cross-generational projects and their success factors first a sample of projects was presented by the participants themselves. The living library method was employed to give participants the chance to decide themselves which information is relevant for them. In the box you can find a summary of the projects written by participant Eleri James[2].

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[1]The text of the definitions and references can be found in the appendix.

[2]For further information the contact information of the presenters of the workshops can be found in the Appendix.

Angela Flood, England She presented a case study she had undertaken in her workplace to understand whether there was a generational gap between employees with training, communications and opportunities. She then presented the results and recommendations.

Siobhan Coyle, Ireland about Macra na Feirme's scheme "Know your neighbour weekend" that promoted localised events within individual communities that varied from coffee mornings to dances to a traditional raking evening. It's now turned into an annual event, which communities look forward to.

Ieva Brikmane, Latvia who presented a programme that brought seniors and youth together to learn. The seniors were given tasks that must be performed in two lessons per week over the course of 12 months in 30 places around the country to a total of 360 youngsters aged between 8-18. They're still in the middle of the project and are due to finish in September 2012.

Zsoka Fekete, Hungary who went around with six other members around the country asking farmers about their farms –old and young. It questioned why the young people left farms and went into urban areas to work. The results were published in a booklet, and they intend to review the findings to see if they can come up with any answers or try to resolve issues.

Iannis Tragakis, Greece shared his experience of the young teaching the old in a government funded programme that offered seniors guidance from the young in computer lessons. It followed on to social networks and two other block work.

Pippa McKerva, England talked about her Storyline project that ran in the north of England with the intention of addressing people's issues with their own community by creating a fake community on paper and resolving their issues in whichever way they chose. Facilitators were used to mediate and guide discussions gently.

As the living library method also gave time for discussion the participants already had the chance to reflect about the success factors for a project. In the following workshop possible success factors were listed and there was "much cohesion" about which factors might be relevant. After brainstorming a lot of success factors, the second part of the workshop consisted of the identification of key success factors. As discribed in the report of a par-

ticipant and also mentioned in the reflection groups it was enlighting what different people thought makes a project successfull. A lot of experience with cross generational projects was shared during that part of the day, e.g. about the importance of clear aims or the motivating role of a strong leader. To structure them , different layers were given:

1. On the individual level personal skills, motivation and leadership skills (at least for the leaders) were regarded as important. To be aware of one's personal aims also played a role.

2. Mutual respect, a clear vision of the needs addressed by the project, the sharing of experiences and good communication as well as good connections were identified as success factors on an interpersonal or organisational layer. The definition of clear aims and a proper project plan was mentioned here as well.

3. As most abstract level, the policy layer came last. Organisational support as well asmoral support ("respect") for the actors were identified here.

3.3   Cross-generational experience and communication

The title of the following is "Forum Theatre – successful behaviours in intergenerational communication". After having discussed success factors in cross-generational projects on political, organisational, individual levels, the next step was to take an experience based approach to the topic. This allows the participants not only to reason about Intergenerational Solidarity in general but to search their own lives for situations with an intergenerational aspect – and in case, to work on problem solving from it. Forum Theatre gives the opportunity to see how individual behaviour in specific situations can be efficient in order to have useful interaction between generations. This session also built an experiential background for the next session on communication approaches and models. The method Forum Theatre is derived from the "Dilemma Theatre" or "Theatre of the Oppressed" for which plenty of information is available online[3].

As the approach taken with the Dilemma Theatre was rather emotional and group dynamic, the report in this place has to find a balance between utilizing the outcomes and safeguarding the privacy of those who have shared

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[3]As the educational advisor Arturas Deltuva was involved in creating Forum Theatre, he can also provide more information on Forum Theatre in particular.

very personal experience during the workshop. Much of the outcomes of the discussions went under closer examination in the communication workshops the next morning. To convey some of the atmosphere and contents of the Dilemma Theatre a report by two participants – Carlotta Berton and Alessio Vitello – will be quoted (see box). It also gives a vivid impression of the empathy felt during the workshop and how the learning experience went beyond rational comprehension towards emotional learning:

We understood there isn't right solution into life's events. All of us thinks our own solution is the best solution ever, that we fit up to us depending on our feelings, humour, or suggestions. We saw a great participation in this activity subsection, especially thanks to the first exercise, where everybody had the chance to take a contact with their own body and feel free to do something stupid; this exercise allows us to have the brain empty for a while and focus to something we identify as a DILEMMA during the "closing eyes time". The tree scenes acted have painted a macro "feeling" of our days:

- what can we do when we see somebody else is suffering, also in a war?

- what can we do to live well our lives into most important relationships (parents, friends, neighbours, etc.)? [. . .]

- the "neighbours –friends –father" was the best outcome, maybe others group didn't show a real "dilemma", maybe because everybody has a problem to explain his life to others persons and feel them friendly and propelling.

There isn't a solution, we said at the start of the report. We saw it in this scene. The protagonist has an hard contact to all characters, because always late, a lot of thinks to do and don't want to listen any negative feedbacks about her lifestyle. The most intense end explosive part was perhaps with the father, not agree with daughter's choices. When the act finished we thought was not a case that two women and mothers try to give an additional interpretation of the story.

The experience learns that sometimes we need to communicate better with our parents/friends/neighbours, maybe also with smart ways to catch their attention. The intergenerational exchange shows how the "how" we say something can changes situations. A "better communication" is difficult to identify but, for sure, screaming in the face of somebody is not exactly the best way to communicate. Everybody was

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> really involved into the activity. The eyes of everyone were interested to understand how an event can changes and takes a new shape just changing a word in a sentence. A very intense activity who was appreciate by all the group. [...] Thanks Alessio & Carlotta

It should be mentioned that the method of Dilemma Theatre is not age invariant. That means that people of different age groups have a different access to it, in particular to theatre playing. There might be young participants who are not used to act (or dislike it). If the same appears for older people it might have another quality. In one case in our study session a person stood on a stage the last time 50 years ago. He was grateful for the unexpected opportunity to act again – but that might also be related to the careful and extensive preparation put in this part of the programme.

During the session on Tuesday afternoon the discussions went very much around the actual situation described in the theatre scenes. In order to move back from the personal-involvement-level to a perspective of observation and analysis, three different models or tools for studying communication were applied the next morning. The group split in three workshops by individual choice and got together afterwards to present the outcomes to the plenary. As the tools presented are generally well known they will only be described as far as necessary for understanding the outcomes. Scenes from the Dilemma Theatre of the previous day were partly analysed but also additional material was taken in.

Workshop 1 Communication Pyramid (Watzlawick)

The well-known model "communication pyramid" by Paul Watzlawick (see picture) was introduced to the participants and applied to the scenes of the previous day. It was learned that the aim of a person communicating often does not coincide with its main message. It is important to know the difference in order to communicate properly. Like in Dilemma Theatre it was important to understand the possibility of making a choice, that means to be more aware about your reasons to choose one or another way to reach an aim.

Workshop 2 The four aspects of a message (Schulz v. Thun)[4]

Splitting up a message into the four aspects of appeal, relationship, self-revealing and factual content can give important information about the

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[4]See e.g. `http://www.forumzfd-akademie.de/files/va_media/nid1517.media_filename.pdf`
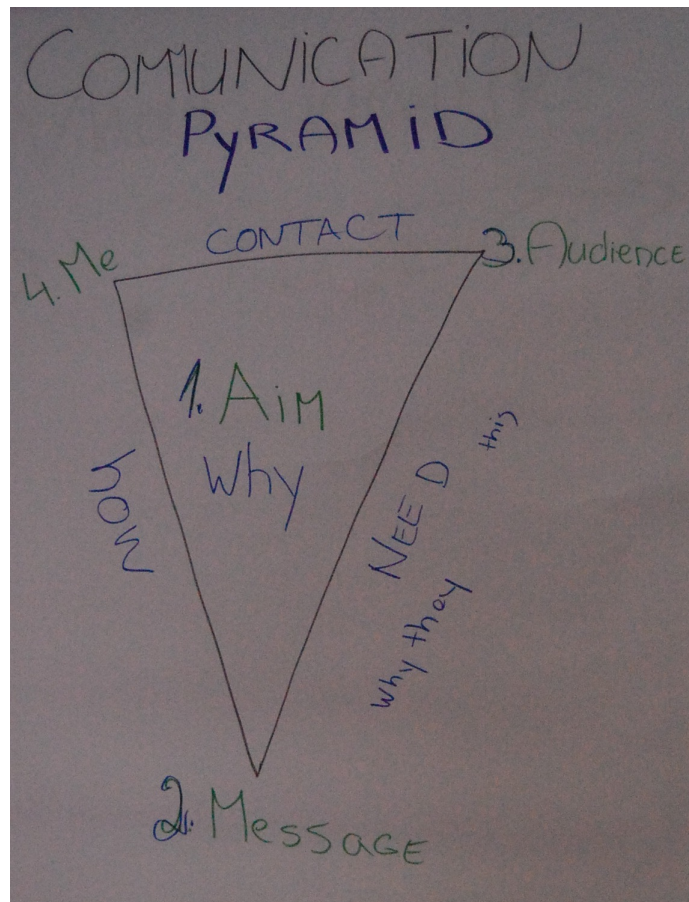
Figure 2: The communication Pyramid

senders intentions, the receivers' chance to understand them and therefore the likeliness of successful communication (in the sense that the intention the sender wants to express is understood by the receiver). In the workshops the participants had the chance to analyse sentences of their choice with the method. One sentence and its possible decomposition on the sender-side of the communication are presented here:

The meaning of the sentence is not at once clear if you only analyse the words. It is not only unclear which basic interpretation (affirmative or negative) is to be chosen, it is also unclear which aspect of the message is to be stressed. The model was described by participants as helpful in analysing communication and in learning from unsuccessful experiences how to avoid misunderstandings –or better, how to send clearer, unambiguous messages.

	Factual: It is different from how I have done it before	
Self-revealing: I am disappointed, I feel I must change, I am a nostalgic person	**"That's not how we used to do it in my day"**	**Appeal:** Do it like I did! Go Ahead!
	Relationship: I am listening to you, I am more experienced I want to manipulate you	

Figure 3: Example for "four aspects of a message"

Workshop 3 Active listening

For the participants of the workshop on active listening it clearly showed that this ability is needed on both sides of cross generational communication processes. From deficits in active listening in scenes seen on the previous day some implications for the importance of active listening were derived. It is often stressed that the young need to listen to the elderly because of their experience and as a token of respect; however the group clearly stated how important active listening towards children is. In their analysis they stressed the pedagogical aspect: active listening and respect will only become part of their lives if they are used to them. Active listening to children in communication processes was also seen as a sign for their equal treatment ("same eye level"). As cross generational communication takes place in a setting which has a disposition for stereotyping, active listening was regarded as an important strategy to overcome prejudices and to "avoid making assumptions" (even if they are well-intentioned).

3.4 From cross-generational projects to intergenerational solidarity

Studying different examples of cross-generational projects and learning how to act as an individual in a cross generational context equipped participants with an amount of knowledge that would allow them to transfer what

was learned to situations from their respective backgrounds. The methodology chosen to give the participants a chance to take a closer look at their home environments and to think what could be done there (in terms of intergenerational solidarity) was project planning. The method was challenging due to the broad variety of participants (again it was not invariant under age aspects). Also the age range played a certain role in how this part of the programme went.

As project planning was not the purpose of the study session but merely a tool used in it, the introduction to "what is a project" was kept rather short. Many of the younger participants were happy with keeping the theoretical part brief as they only saw it as a refreshment of what many of them had learned in trainings before. A few of the older participants criticised the way the introduction to the new working method was done: most of them had outstanding experience with project work and therefore found what was presented not accurate enough. As a consequence during the subsequent course of this programme element mixing different experience levels and sharing knowledge about project planning was strongly encouraged. The T-KIT on project management[5] was used as a resource for this part of the programme. It served its purpose very well in sense that it was a good way to briefly present the methods and tools needed and not to go too much into detail – which would have led the participants too far away from the actual topic, which was to achieve Intergenerational Solidarity through cross-generational projects. In the beginning of this part of the programme (on Wednesday afternoon) some basic knowledge about project management was spread like a definition and the project life cycle (on page 29 of the T-kit). More intensely was the work on the needs analysis (pp. 47-53). The importance of this was highlighted during a group discussion. One of the outcomes was that there is only very little knowledge about the needs of the different groups in a village. The "danger of making assumptions" was highlighted again. A needs analysis can in most cases not be done by a small project group but the people who form the target group of the project have to be asked directly about their demands. Otherwise the risk of stereotyping and not recognizing the real need would be high. So the participants were trained not to only to reason about the needs of different (age-) groups but to find ways of gathering evidence for their assumptions –with methods like surveys and workshops with the target groups.

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[5]The T-KITs (Training Kits) are a result of the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the Youth field. They provide valuable practical information on numerous topics and can easyly be found online.

For the definition of aims the SMART concept from the T-kit (pp. 54-58) was used. It was adjusted to the SMARTie concept for this course. The last two letters (ie for IntergEnerational) were thought as a hint to the intergenerational aspect which should be part of the project definition.

Groups of similar projects were formed which worked on their ideas independently. The small group or even single work was interrupted every now and then by an additional input from the preparation team or by a phase of feedback in which the groups had the chance to inform the other ones about the proceedings. These "feedback markets" were very much appreciated by the participants. As all the projects were cross-generational it was important for the planners to learn about the views of different age groups and their ideas and propositions. It was witnessed in this part of the programme how much the group benefited from its diversity regarding age and fields of experience.

A few examples of the projects are given below:

One participant is a university professor of medicine. His work focused on implementing a trainings scheme on geriatrics for young physicians at his university. With the feedback during one of the feedback markets he managed to adjust his plans in a surprising way. Originally, the training scheme just implied training young doctors in how to treat old patients adequately. Although being a project idea which dealt with different age groups, the real intergenerational aspect was missing. So in the feedback the idea came up to employ older physicians in the training who can give medical advice and training about indications they might have personal experience with. Also including older patients was considered worthwhile. As the social component of the doctor-patient relationship is often underestimated in university training, including older people and their needs in the training scheme could give practical and very useful experiences to the trainees.

A second project dealt with e-literacy and aimed at older people who are willing to learn computer skills. To organise such trainings two resources were needed: computer rooms and trainers (or at least people who are already acquainted with the use of computers). Apparently, both can be found in many youth centres. So an initiative was planned to involve young people and the infrastructure of youth centres into the computer-skills training for older people. Two main challenges are the readiness of possible participants in the programme to be trained by people who are much younger than themselves and also the training of the young trainers.

Thirdly, a project idea of many of the Scandinavian participants from 4H organisations aimed at membership recruitment through intergenerational projects. As it is possible to become a 4H member from an early age, the idea was developed to offer afternoon activities for grandparents together with their grandchildren. Thus, the need for social contacts with other members of their age groups of both target groups would be met.

As motivation again was addressed as an important factor for the success of the projects the last unit of this part of the programme focussed on motivating and advertising Cross-generational projects (and thus Intergenerational Solidarity). As the economic incentives for participating in cross-generational project work often are generally low or at least not effective in a short term consideration, another approach had to be chosen. The different project groups elaborated key emotions of their projects (like happiness, compassion or trust) and developed presentations around them. In the reflection -groups one participant stated that "preparing the emotional presentation made us a team". This indicates that approaches focussed on analysing (needs analysis) and rationalizing (project planning) should be supplemented by others when dealing with intergenerational situations. In one of the reports also the following statement could be found:

"The groups were successful in creating the short presentations and the movies that came out in the end were great. The creative presentations were a great product of hard but real team work and explained the project ideas more clearly to others."

The emotional presentations even helped in explaining the characters of the project more clearly which was an unexpected outcome. But this clearly shows that cross-generational projects are specific and different from many approaches that leave aside the intergenerational aspect.

3.5 A European policy perspective

As "To learn about European policies and developments in the promotion of intergenerational solidarity" was an important aim of the study session, an external speaker was invited who gave an overview about the topic. Part of her presentation was the "Manifesto for an age friendly Europe"[6], a collection of theses how to make Europe more liveble for old and young people. The way the participants perceived these insights are very well

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[6]The Manifesto can be found as the last Appendix

described in Zuzana Grochalova's report of the session which can be found in the box.

Alice Sinigaglia represents AGE platform Europe and her power point presentation introduced us to structure and lobbying tools. She also spoke about its developments and objectives within European Youth (EY) for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations. 2012 is dedicated to this topic and as 29th April is EU Day of Solidarity between Generations. She also presented the informal group EY 2012 Coalition, and Alice encouraged us to contribute to this campaign by launching and sharing our initiatives and projects.

Young participants were interested in online discussion about InterGenerational Solidarity that should run on Twitter during the mentioned European Union (EU) Day on 29th April 2012. As there was no hash tag for the Twitter account yet, they came up with suggestions like # IGS12 or # IGS2012. "InterGenerational Solidarity" was considered by young participants too long and implementing a year would provide opportunities to compare ideas, topics and conclusions from current and future years.

Participants from older generation focused on the definition of the term "older age". It was said the target group includes all the people over 50, even if they are not retired yet. The language of the document brought by Alice Sinigaglia – Manifesto was also in the centre of interest of older participants. According to them it is too abstract and only users with higher education can understand it, while them majority will not. As the speaker explained to us, this document is result of discussions between various NGOs, organisations and institutions dealing with InterGenerational Solidarity.

In order to solve this problem and to make the topic more tangible a workshop was developed. We were working with concrete articles from Manifesto and we were trying to implement them into a rural context. Many interesting ideas, suggestions and notices were provided, for example:

There are urgent needs, the one of an efficinet network of NGOs and organisations able to co-operate on local and international levels, the need of support from govermental bodies, the need of creative attitude of already existing facilities , to implement knowledge and experiences of elderlies in non-formal education projects, low-cost alternative

> health/emergency system.
>
> Ideas how our organisations could implement aspect of intergenerational solidarity were also very interesting. As the slogan of EY 2012 is "Everyone has a role to play!" we brought suggestions how we could take a part in implementing topic in our (social) environments. Brainstorming showed that there already exist solid base on which we can build as our organisations are able to provide services like potentional trainings, education, events as well as they are willing to implement already used project tools in it (example: storytelling as making plan method with title "BACK IN THE DAYS").

The second part of the workshop with the external speaker consisted of work on the "Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020". The ten positive aspects of an age friendly Europe mentioned in the document were written on flipchard paper and spread out on tables in the room. Then the participants had a chance to make commentsregarding e.g. the rural aspects of these recommendations. A full list of the outcomes of that part of the session can be found in the Appendix. Point four of the Manifesto claims for "Goods and services that are adapted to the needs of all". The participants found this to be quiet challenging from a rural perspective. A selection of their comments can be found in the box.

> "Schools should be open during the summer" –"rural communities should be allowed to use the building for IGS programs."
>
> Difficulties mentioned were: transport, roads, less money, exclusion from process (no feeling for the project), not enough benefits, access to health/social care, internet & technology, accessibility of mobile services, rural bus service.
>
> Recommendations: New roads, Public transport everywhere, Fundraising, Mobile Health units, library, shop, relevant information, Local provision, Run local classes for the elderly
>
> First of all analyze and research of (non) accessible goods and services need to be done – after this, public discussion what is missed in rural areas – then establish or better introduce them methods how local community can be sustainable in agricultural and permaculture way of living.

In the feedback for the afternoon session it became clear that the methodological turnabout – from open and active, experience based and performing approaches to a rather academic way of debating a document – was harsh for many participants. While the younger participants rather complained about the change of methodology itself, some older criticised that their expectations were not met in terms of going into the Manifesto-process even deeper. So again the intergenerational aspect showed to be challenging when it comes to the selection of methodological approaches.

3.6 Individual consequences and plans

On the last day of the study session the participants were called upon to reflect on their individual motivations and plans for the time after the activity. With the help of a worksheet they had the chance to make an individual inventory of their learning points. As shown in the picture, methodology was employed to help participants becoming more aware of what was learned and which could be the next steps.

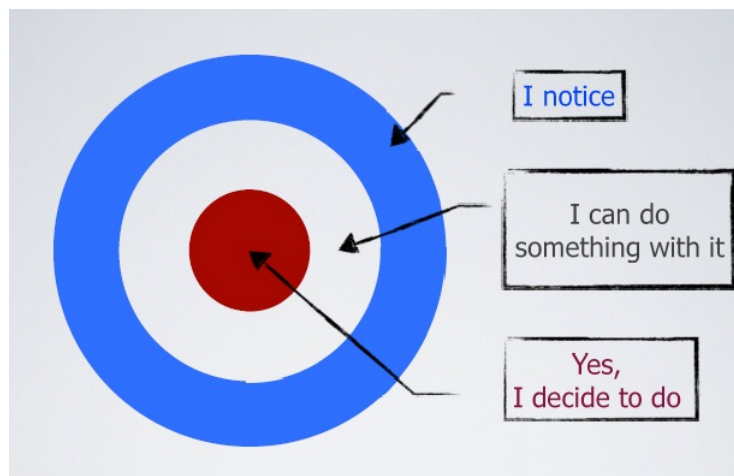Figure 4: Implementing what was learned

As a participant stated in a report: "For me this worksheet helped me to find reason behind projects. It helped to focus on my target group, how it would be done and the planned time frame of implementing it." They also rated their learning outcomes and plans according to the scheme in the picture to make a choice where to begin. With the method of peer group

supervision ("Kollegiale Beratung"[7]) the participants then discussed their plans with others to gain feedback in an "unusual framework", as many said. The method of peer group supervision requires the person seeking feedback to remain silently listening while the other peers discuss his plans. According to participants´ comments they found the possibility of getting advice without having a chance to give "feedback on the feedback" quiet helpful. "I got my mission tailored" was a statement made in the reflection-groups of that day. It was also mentioned that this constellation supported the passing on of experience from one participant to another and the views from different perspectives from an international context. The experience of being understood by their peers in the group gave some a relaxed feeling and motivation for the time after their return to their usual environments.

4 Main Outcomes of the Study-Session

4.1 Learning outcomes for participants and hosts

The awareness of communication as a key success factor for intergenerational work is something every participant has taken home from the session. Furthermore, best practices were exchanged and a range of ideas for new projects were picked up. These include several healthcare projects with an intergenerational component as well as educational activities. One project focused on the possibility to involve the grandparents-generation to recruit new members for youth clubs in rural areas.

The problem of stereotyping between generations was recognised as a pan-European issue. The stereotypes are quiet similar in all countries that were present at the study session and therefore seem to lay rather deep. The need to address them actively and to overcome them by age-aware communication can be regarded as an important learning outcome.

In the session with the external speaker concrete recommendations to the "Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020", a document by an alliance of NGOs, were developed (see Appendix). The aim was to specify the general ideas of the paper for a rural context. That means, for instance, that the accessibility of services in rural areas is far more dependent on the mobility of the users than it is in urban regions.

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[7]http://www.peer-supervision.com/Ebene1/methode.html

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The participants produced several short video clips and presentations which convey core ideas and emotions of their project ideas. Furthermore, along with the learning diaries the participants filled in individually, there is plenty of material the participants and the hosting organisation now are using to promote intergenerational solidarity.

Many participants stated that their knowledge about intergenerational solidarity was broadened and became clearer by talking it over with people from many different backgrounds. Some participants highlighted that the intergenerational approach taken in the study session itself (by having participants from different age groups) showed them clearly how useful it is to not only try to make projects for different generations but to include everyone concerned from the beginning.

For Rural Youth Europe as the hosting organisation it was impressive how an intergenerational approach can broaden its scope of activities and produce added value for the organisation and its members. The project on recruiting with the help of the grandparent-generation and the very positive feedback of the younger participants on what they learned from the older generations were impressive examples for that.

4.2   Recommendations for future trainings

Clarifying the vocabulary in the beginning of the session was crucial for the success of the communication process. The different understanding of words – because of cultural and national differences or whether one was a native speaker or not – across different age groups was very significant in the beginning of the session. Only by active methods like the work on a course definition a consensus on the use of words was reached.

The prep-team already paid much attention in the choice of methodology to comfort the different age and cultural groups present at the study session. The "dictatorship of youth and playfulness" which often rules at such events had to be eased. This does not mean that activities requiring for instance strong physical involvement have to be omitted from the start. But the facilitator and maybe a second, specially designated person – which has the responsibility to look after these aspects – have to be more aware of age relevant issues all the time, for example jumping on a balloon to attract the groups attention for an announcement is not the method of choice in a cross-generational context. The use of Dilemma Theatre can be regarded as a successful implementation of this policy.

Open methods like the living library or variations of idea-markets played an important role for the study-session. There are presumably two reasons why this contributed to the success of the event:

1. The different levels of experience according to the age of participants. Some of them were involved in structured project work for the first time during the session while others had outstanding careers as project managers. The discussions related to these differences were regarded as fruitful from both sides.

2. The different levels of expertise according to age. The young participants were mainly involved with (rural) youth work and had strong expertise, while some of the older participants were very experienced in social work with older people. The exchange of expertise between these fields also was regarded as fruitful and a necessary condition for the success of cross-generational projects.

It is advisable to use an over-average share of open methodology and other ways to produce many situations in which the participants can benefit from each others experience, expertise and questions.

4.3 Follow up activities

A number of follow up activities have arisen from the study session. The outcomes of the discussion on the manifesto have been forwarded to the AGE platform Europe to support them in their knowledge about rural areas. AGE platform Europe has also initiated a Twitter chat on Intergenerational Solidarity in which some participants of the study session took part.

There were articles written about the event in the publications of several rural youth organisations[8].

Of course the seminar was reported on in the magazine of Rural Youth Europe[9].

The German Federation of Rural Youth dedicated a full issue of its magazine to the topic of intergenerational solidarity[10].

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[8]e.g. Ireland p.12 http://www.macra.ie/system/assets/104/original/m-magazine-summer-2012.pdf

[9]Rural Youth Europe, p.4-5 http://www.ruralyoutheurope.com/attachments/article/311/Rural-Info_02-2012_final.pdf

[10]http://bdl.landjugend.info/attachments/053_bdl_spezial_012012.pdf

As one can read e.g. from the facebook group of the participants they have been dealing with the topic afterwards – not necessarily with implementing a full project plan but with smaller steps. One example is a participant who will take over a responsible position in a local association and implement what was learned during the study session to attract younger members. The outcomes of the session also have influence on the master thesis of one of the participants.

Appendix A

Intergeneration Solidarity Definitions

Intergenerational Practice ~ Beth Johnson Foundation
Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.
(http://www.centreforip.org.uk/)

Intergenerational Learning ~ European map of Intergenerational Learning
Intergenerational Learning (IL) describes the way that people of all ages can learn together and from each other. IL is an important part of Lifelong Learning, where the generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge. Beyond the transfer of knowledge, IL fosters reciprocal learning relationships between different generations and helps to develop social capital and social cohesion in our ageing societies. IL is one way of addressing the significant demographic change we are experiencing across Europe and is as a way of enhancing intergenerational solidarity through intergenerational practice (IP).
(http://www.emil-network.eu/about/what-is-intergenerational-learning)

Intergenerational Practice ~ European map of Intergenerational Learning
The aim of IP is to bring together people from different generations in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building communities and neighborhoods where people respect each other and are better connected. IP is inclusive, building on the positive resources that both the younger and older generations have to offer each other and those around them.
(http://www.emil-network.eu/about/what-is-intergenerational-learning)

Intergenerational Co-operation ~ Congress of Local & Regional Authorities
Co-operation between all citizens in order to ensure the proper
coexistence and functioning of civil society.
Its defining characteristics include:
– active, free, conscious and equitable collaboration among citizens of a democratic state;
– it is a fundamental component of social peace and justice;
– and a democratic method for resolving present and future societal problems.
(https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1109193&Site=CM)

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Appendix C:
Outcomes of the Manifesto discussion

How could the point 1 be implemented in rural context?

- To bring this topic to public discussions especially with public & governmental bodies responsible for policies in rural area

- Promote and advertise old project that can be used to make and an example to organisations who want to to start up a project, too

Do/how do you see the role of your organisation?

- In promoting idea of active ageing

- To spread tolerance

- Adult education seminar

- Give good example to others

What are the other actors?

- National/governmental/commissions focused in supporting this issue

- Every people in the world should change their attitude about that topic, so this mentality could expand. One person can make a change

How could the point 2 be implemented in rural context?

- Lobby gov. EU + national level for equal pay for rural workers

- Knowledge transfer though the use of ideas like 4H learning by doing using young + old in workshops

- Through the local volunteering to the real job

- Through voluntary work/(maybe paid work-> creating jobs) in organizations with specific aims: workshops about the topic (like disabilities, chronic conditions)

  → creating clubs and camps with special aims

- How to find ways and balance for jobs and suitable recourses

Do/how do you see the role of your organisation?

- Macra Na Feirme lobby Gov. for fair payments (min. wage) for all e.g. rural nurse, farmer, etc.

- Offering a voluntary opportunity, experience, knowledge

- By offering maybe camps. etc. and finding people to lead it – creating jobs

What are the other actors?

- Training organizations

- Health Authority

- Ministry of employment

How could the point 3 be implemented in rural context?

- Building some place where people can meet together, for example outdoor work-out facilities, volleyball charts

- Transport → create a special transport for events what would bring people from rural areas too

- "Week of Mobility" could contain IGS aspect by involving seniors & typical traditional rural ways of transport/vehicles like tractors

- Playground for small children adapted for different ages

- Local organisations should get together to invest in a minibus

Do/how do you see the role of your organisation?

- Organising these projects and taking care of people for transport

- Help building sports courts or work-out parks, gyms, parks with benches etc.

- There is every year event on EU level: "week of mobility" we could implement it in IGS aspect

- Organise transport for some people that can't afford it

- Organise regular upkeeping of general areas as part of annual programme

What are the other actors?

- Volunteers, politicians

- Raise people' consciousness and conscience

- Government

- Organisations, businesses

How could the point 4 be implemented in rural context?

- Schools should be open during the summer – Rural communities should be allowed to use the building for IGS programmes

- Difficulties:
  - Transport
  - Roads
  - Less money
  - Exclusion from process (no feeling for the project)
  - Not enough benefits
  - Access to health/social Care
  - Internet & Technology
  - Accessibility – Mobile services
  - Rural Bus service
  → Recommendations
  - New roads
  - Public transport everywhere
  - Fundraising
  - Mobile, Health units, library, shop, relevant information
  - Local provision
  - Run local classes for the elderly

- First of all analyse & research of (non) accessible goods & services that need to be done – After this, public discussion what is missed in rural areas – Then establish or better introduce them methods how local community can be sustainable in agricultural + permaculture way of living

Do/how do you see the role of your organisation?

- Organise meetings about difficulties

- Provide trainings + workshops about permaculture principles

What are the other actors?

- Private companies

- Other organizations
- Sponsors/donators
- Schools
- Libraries
- Local governments could ask or conduct a study of the buildings, goods, services they already have & think of way they can be further used, open public dialogue on what we have + how it can be better used

How could the point 5 be implemented in rural context?

- Kids teaching seniors to use computers
- Interactive services e.g. in public transportation
- Social events: computer game night
- ICT classes in the community (village hall, school, libraries, shop etc)
- Interactive services (online website) where you can send the application to obtain permits, authorizations, to e.g. build up an event
- Creating a computer club where people have free access to the internet
- At schools (The Knowledge Volunteers Project) with students, volunteers
- Reward program eg. Certificate for young people to show they have taught ICT to older generation

Do/how do you see the role of your organisation?

- IT workshops, clubs
- Photography, clubs
- Computer courses
- PR workshops
- IT Library in small places
- Already running the The Knowledge Volunteer project and trying to expand at rural areas (50+ Hellas)

What are the other actors?

- Educational partners/trainers
- Funding
- Facilities
- Human resources
- Promotion

How could the point 6 be implemented in rural context?

- Someone/something representing your concerns, issues (a representative)
- Programme of action (who is/will be the "owner" of this?)
- Evidence that this is needed
- Strengthening your voice by networking with other appropriate actors/organizations etc
- Information/shared→gathering/published
- Think carefully about timing and location of decisions
- By an e-gov website
- Conduct more intensive research into Rural communities to establish what they want/need i.e. to listen to their voice
- Masters in Research in universities. But specifically state that is must look at this topic

Do you see a role for your organisation?

- The needs of the people affected are met
- Youth questioned about policies in basic form + seniors
- Looking at the level of representation of young people in decision making bodies
- Macra could ask clubs to conduct mini research projects + tell the results i.e. Be the voice of Rural Youth→ we already have an established network of clubs in the communities that people trust
- Supporting/developing a strategic approach to support other required actions (AF)
- Experience of working/developing across different organizations (AF) in the EU

What is the role of other actors?

- Public sector → Support at policy level
- Care about the results of community based research/needs of X

How could the point 7 be implemented in rural context?

1. Using village clubs for organizing activities for senior people
2. Old people in villages have no abilities to work (be employed) so they will be happy to be important in activities
3. Organising special events by using old people's knowledge and experience.
4. Competitions
5. Network of active old people of rural areas of country
6. Agricultural tourism
7. Activities/events organized should be available for everyone in a certain village/area

Could your organisation play a role?

- By arranging activities of each village club
- Consulting and supporting
- By organizing workshops
- To take advantage of older people who have a lot of spare time. Have storytelling about how it was "Back in days" (making a play)
- YEPP Langhe is organising events and recreational activities

What are the other actors?

- Give and get information from other key organizations working on ageing
- Public institutions can help with some service
- 4H and pro (pensioners country organization)

How could the point 8 be implemented in rural context?

- Ensure quality of education

- Encourage education

- Lobby

- Formal and non-formal → Diversity

- To make projects between generations happen
    - Local
    - Organisation
    - Policy

- Need to satisfy needs of all people

- Identify these needs

- Seniors can teach lifelong experience to youth

- Youth can teach adults new technologies

- ICT Lessons

Could your organization play a role?

- Yes, expand urban knowledge of bringing generations together (Beth Johnson Foundation)

- Yes, by supporting meetings and sessions, and organizing events that will inform more people

- Organising common events between generations

- Updating information

Do you see role for other actors?

- Rural policy makers

- Government

- Businesses

- Young people being involved in intergenerational activities

- Young people who know how to use new technologies and old people who have knowledge of specific topics

How could the point 9 be implemented in rural context?

- Young farmers organizations could educate all young people in Rural areas of their entitlements e.g pensions (i.e. Nor Fusk YFD.GPS) therefore when our generation become old gen. we can pass on that knowledge

- Elderly people could encourage young people to educate and work, so that they will get pension money when they retire

- Elderly people could have their money and medicine delivered at home due to their disability or some other reason

Could your organisation play a role?

- Arranging first aid courses

- Inform about education & work to youth

- Macra could create mentoring scheme to advise Rural people of their rights to access of service

- Wales YFC could create info days to cover the subject

- Gather volunteers that will help elderly people take part of in different events

Do you see the role for other actors?

- Gov. agencies → e.g. Social welfare Depts.

- Red Cross could provide seminars on health topics

How could the point 10 be implemented in rural context?

- Understanding the challenges of long distances

- Try to prevent social exclusion

- Establish effective network of low-cost bodies co-operating with educated/trained volunteers

- Community/Rural areas are trained in First Responder/First Aid

- National curriculum should include mandatory modules in Mental health

    →How to maintain mental health + have it taught from primary school level

- Donor-action (volunteers give blood etc.)

- Transversal team with different kind of professionals with different skills to approach the project from different points of view

Could your organisation play a role?

- First aid learning (courses)

- Work against bullying and discrimination

- Exchange of skills

- "4H" grannynanny": seniors look after kids while parents are working

- Macra can educate members & can highlight heath issues

- Invite local health representatives to come to "club evenings"

- Organise regular exercise as part of the Club Programme

- Visit health organizations as part of an educational trip

- Workshops to spread awareness of the topic

- Advertising /TV-commercial how important is to maintain mental and body health?

- Equity in Health Institute is trying to do it

What actors should play a role?

- Youth organizations (e.g. 4H, YFC, BU), care centers, councils, politicians, volunteers

- Teaching organizations

- Business owners, e.g. gyms

- School nurses

- Yourself

Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020

Achieving a society for all ages will require decision makers and all relevant stakeholders to take collective responsibility for designing new ways of organising our societies to ensure a fairer and more sustainable future for all generations. We believe that the current demographic change is a key opportunity for everyone to work together to **create an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020.**

What does creating an Age-Friendly European Union mean?

Creating an Age-Friendly European Union means fostering solidarity between generations and enabling the active participation and involvement of all age groups in society while providing them with adequate support and protection. Through an Age-Friendly European Union, every age and population group will benefit from:

1. A **positive attitude to ageing** that recognises the value of all age groups' identities and contribution to society;
2. An **inclusive labour market** that ensures the participation in paid work of younger and older people, including those with disabilities or chronic conditions, supports the intergenerational knowledge transfer and enables workers to both maintain their health and reconcile their work and private lives;
3. **Accessible outdoor spaces, buildings and transport as well as adapted housing and physical activity facilities** that promote independent living and participation in society for longer, while increasing opportunities for exchange within and across generations;
4. **Goods and services** that are **adapted to the needs** of all;
5. **Digital inclusion** to enable participation in the increasingly ICT-based society as citizens, employees, consumers, service users and carers, friends and family members;
6. The possibility to have **a voice in the decision-making and research processes** that affect them;
7. The opportunity to actively participate in **volunteering, cultural, sport and recreational activities**, thus creating and/or maintaining their social networks, gaining new competences and contributing to their personal fulfilment and wellbeing;
8. **Access to lifelong and intergenerational learning** to acquire new skills and knowledge at any age;
9. **Social protection systems based on intra- and inter-generational solidarity** that prevent and alleviate poverty, guarantee adequacy of old-age income and sustainability of pension schemes for both current and future generations, ensure access to quality social and healthcare services across the life course and support informal carers;
10. Conditions and opportunities to grow and age in **good mental and physical health** through disease prevention and the promotion of physical activity, a healthy diet, wellbeing and health literacy, as well as action on key social determinants of ill-health.

Why now?

2012 will be the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (EY2012). Its objectives are to:

- Promote active ageing in employment;
- Facilitate active ageing in the community;
- Promote healthy ageing and independent living;
- Enhance solidarity between the generations.

In the context of the persistent economic and social crisis, amplified by demographic change, we believe that the Year is a unique opportunity to encourage national and EU policy makers, together with all relevant actors, to consider innovative solutions to address the impact of the crisis on our ageing societies. Now is also the time to make long lasting commitments to create an Age-Friendly European Union that empowers people to age in good health and to actively contribute to society in a way that is fair and sustainable for all generations.

To international and European decision-makers: get involved!

The European Union should **mainstream** the promotion of an age-friendly environment in all relevant EU policy processes and funding programmes to support action at all levels.
The European Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and WHO-Europe should also pool their resources. They should coordinate their actions to adopt a **"European Strategy for Active and Healthy Ageing and an Age-Friendly European Union"** to help Member States achieve their Europe 2020 objective to create smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Strategy should:

- **Build synergies** between existing EU policy processes and funding programmes and the UN policy instruments and implementation programmes on ageing to ensure that these processes will deliver better outcomes in the promotion of active ageing and solidarity between generations;
- Include the creation of an **EU Age-Friendly Environment Network** and other initiatives such as a **European Covenant of Mayors on Active and Healthy Ageing or Demographic Change** to gather and support local and regional public authorities committed to fostering active ageing and intergenerational solidarity in their communities;
- Seize the opportunity of a **renewed Social Open Method of Coordination to effectively involve civil society in social policy making** in order to achieve adequate, fair and sustainable social protection systems and enhance overall social cohesion;
- **Strengthen research** that evaluates and promotes solutions to respond to the needs of our ageing population in ways that are fair for all generations while contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth in a Europe free of poverty.

To national governments: empower • involve • implement!

With the support of the EU, national, regional and local actors should develop plans to promote age-friendly environments in response to demographic change. Such plans should seek to facilitate the involvement of a wide range of actors in the EU Age-Friendly Environment Network. These plans should also foster the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations and citizens themselves, in the development, implementation and monitoring of adequate and sustainable solutions for our ageing population. In particular, policy measures and/or legal frameworks should be developed to:

- Implement active ageing strategies that take into account the outcomes of current and past **research** on ageing as well as the **specific needs** of vulnerable groups, e.g. migrants and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, low-income workers and people with atypical working careers;
- Challenge ageism in all aspects of life and promote **non-discrimination and gender equality** in all aspects of active ageing and intergenerational solidarity;
- Create **accessible workplaces** and **age- and gender-friendly working conditions**;
- Implement urban and rural planning that **ensure accessible physical environments** and **access to information**;
- Strengthen social **cohesion, inclusion and participation** across the life cycle;
- Guarantee **adequate and fair health and social protection** systems for all ages and **access to quality services** in order to ensure that the most vulnerable older people can live dignified lives, free of poverty and social exclusion.

To all stakeholders, including European citizens: make it happen!

Local authorities and actors, the business sector, public institutions, civil society organisations, social partners, service providers, town planners, researchers, education providers, the media and citizens all have a role to play. For more information on what can be done to achieve an Age-Friendly European Union, please read our leaflet **"European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations: Everyone has a role to play"**.

Now is the time to move ahead quickly!
Get involved and share your initiatives to help achieve a Europe for all ages!

European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations